

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5747

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0782

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, PGOV, NU

SUBJECT: THE CLIMATE FOR CHANGE: DIFFERENT VIEWS

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR MET SEPARATELY ON FEBRUARY 13 WITH ARCHBISHOP AND PRIVATE SECTOR ACTIVIST WILLIAM BAEZ. THEIR VIEWS ON THE PRESENT CLIMATE FOR CHANGE COINCIDE ON SOME POINTS BUT DIFFER ON OTHERS. AS THEY BOTH WILL LIKELY HAVE IMPORTANT ROLES IN ANY PROCESS TOWARD PEACEFUL CHANGE IN NICARAGUA THEIR VIEWS ARE OF INTEREST. END SUMMARY

1. AMBASSADOR MET WITH BAEZ, MANAGER OF PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE INDE AT LATTER'S REQUEST. BAEZ REPORTED THAT PRIVATE SECTOR WAS ENCOURAGED SO FAR WITH LACK OF REPRISALS FROM GON, BUT ADDED THAT SO FAR THERE WERE ONLY A FEW PEOPLE WHO COULD SEE THE POSSIBILITY

FOR OPENING A DIALOGUE TO IMPLEMENT PEACEFUL CHANGE. BAEX FELT IT WOULD TAKE ONE OR TWO MONTHS FOR PASSIONS ARISING FROM PJ CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION TO COOL SUFFICIENTLY TO ALLOW DISPASSIONATE REACTION TO ANY EFFORTS TOWARD A RENEWED DIALOGUE.

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2. BAEZ DISCARDED ANY EARLY RENEWAL OF NATIONAL WORK STOPPAGE EFFORT. HE SAID PRIVATE SECTOR REALIZED THAT A STRIKE BY ITSELF WAS NOT ENOUGH TO OUST SOMOZA. HOWEVER, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT REINITIATING A STRIKE. BAEZ DENIGRATED THE OPPOSITION POLITICIANS FOR THEIR LACK OF EFFECTIVENESS DURING THE WORK STOPPAGE. HE SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT HIS COUSIN, RAMIRO SACASA, WHO IS A UDEL LEADER, HAD BEEN SO INEFFECTIVE. HE SAID THE POLITICIANS CAME

FLOCKING TO INDE OFFICE TO MEET WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR: THIS SHOWED WHO WAS PROVIDING LEADERSHIP. HE REMARKED THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH A GROUP OF IMPORTANT PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS HAD BEEN VERY IMPORTANT (SEE REFTEL. THESE PEOPLE HAD CONTINUED TO MEET AND PLAN FUTURE ACTIONS. HE RECOMMENDED THAT AMBASSADOR CONTINUE TO MEET WITH THESE PEOPLE AND IN PARTICULAR TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON ALFONSO CALLEJAS AS A KEY ACTOR. (CALLEJAS IS A FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT UNDER RENE SCHICK WHO BROKE WITH SOMOZA OVER THE ISSUE OF CONTINUED SOMOZA RULE. HE IS ALSO A RELIGIOUS ACTIVIST.)

3. BAEZ VIEWS THE CURRENT SITUATION AS A CROSSROADS IN WHICH THERE WILL BE INCREASING REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE UNLESS A PEACEFUL END TO SOMOZA FAMILY RULE CAN BE FOUND, AND THAT THE PROCESS TO END IT IS IRREVERSIBLE. AMBASSADOR ADVISED BAEZ IN GENERAL TERMS THAT HE HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH GON AND HAD FOUND A DISPOSITION FOR UNDERTAKING SOME FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE. BAEZ DID NOT APPEAR SURPRISED AND STATED THAT SEVERAL BUSINESS LEADERS INVOLVED IN THE STRIKE WILL BECOME POLITICALLY ACTIVE TO OVERCOME LACK OF LEADERSHIP ON THE PART OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS.

4. IN A LATER MEETING REQUESTED BY AMBASSADOR, ARCHBISHOP OBANDO Y BRAVO EXPRESSED A SIMILAR ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. HE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE DIRECTION THE COUNTRY IS HEADING. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT SEEM OPTIMISTIC THAT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE NATION'S PROBLEMS COULD BE FOUND WITHOUT MAJOR CONCESSIONS FROM SOMOZA. HE SAID THE ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR EXTRACTING THOSE CONCESSIONS IS FOR

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THE U.S. TO INSIST ON THEM. OBANDO EXPLAINED THAT POLITICIANS AND PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS HAD TRIED TO GET HIM TO LEND THE WEIGHT OF THE CHURCH TO THE OUST-SOMOZA CAMPAIGN DURING THE STRIKE. HE HAD DECLINED TO ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE POLARIZED INTO THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL CAMP. WHEN WE EXPLAINED THE U.S. WAS IN A SIMILAR POSITION OF WANTING TO ENCOURAGE NEEDED CHANGE BUT WAS UNWILLING TO OPENLY INTERVENE IN THE NICARAGUAN POLITICAL PROCESS, OBANDO'S REPLY WAS THAT ONLY THE U.S. COULD CAUSE SOMOZA TO STEP DOWN FROM POWER.

5. AS WITH BAEZ, AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED IN GENERAL TERMS OUR CONTACTS WITH GON TO PROMOTE CHANGE. OBANDO APPEARED PLEASED. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION AS TO WHO OBANDO CONSIDERED IMPORTANT POLITICAL PERSONALITIES WHO WOULD WORK FOR NEEDED CHANGES, HE SUGGESTED REYNALDO TEFEL (INPRHU), RAMIRO SACASA AND PEDRO QUINTANILLA (BOTH LIBERALS IN UDEL), EDUARDO RIVAS GASTEAZORA (NON-UDEL SOCIAL CHRISTIAN

LEADER), JULIO MOLINA (CONSERVATIVE PARTY PCN DEPUTY) AND DOMINGO SANCHEZ SALGADO (SOCIALIST IN UDEL).

6. OBANDO DESCRIBES THE PRESENT SITUATION AS CONTINUING HEAVY-HANDED REPRESSION. HE CITED THE LACK OF ANY CLARIFICATION OF PAST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND RECENT INSTANCES OF REPRESSION DIRECTED

AGAINST RADIO CATOLICA (SEIZURE OF PROTEST MUSTIC RECORDINGS), SHOTS FIRED AND TEARGAS THROWN INTO THE CHURCH AT SAN JUAN DEL SUR, AND DETENTION OF THE PRIEST FROM SAN JUAN DEL SUR AND TWO AMERICAN MARY-KNOLL NUNS AT TOLA (BOTH REPORTED IN LA PRENSA OF FEB 13).

7. POLOFF EARLIER ON THE SAME DAY MET WITH THE TWO NUNS. THEY SAID THEY AND THE PRIEST HAD BEEN DETAINED BY THE GN FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES BUT NEITHER ABUSED NOR INTERROGATED. THEY SAID THEY THOUGHT THE PURPOSE OF THEIR DETENTION WAS TO FRIGHTEN THE PARISHIONERS AWAY FROM WORKING WITH THEM.

8. COMMENT: BOTH BAEZ AND OBANDO AGREE WITH EMBASSY CONCERN THAT WITHOUT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES TO DEMONSTRATE THAT A PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION HAS BEEN PUT IN MOTION WHICH WILL RESULT IN THE END OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SOMOZA DYNASTY, THERE MIGHT BE INCREASING DEFECTION FROM THE RANKS OF PACIFIC AND DEMOCRATIC ACTIVISM TO THE FSLN AND OTHER FORMS OF REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE, AT THE RISK OF A POSSIBLE CIVIL WAR. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO APPEARS TO BE BARZ' APPARENT BELIEF THAT THE GON HAS ALREADY MADE TENTATIVE STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, AND GREATER OPTIMISM THAT NECESSARY CHANGES CAN BE ACHIEVED. CHURCH ACTIVISTS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES CONTINUE TO BE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION.
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